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INFO RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 9601
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RUEHDJ/AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI 4884
RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 2325
RUEHKH/AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM 1571
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 2428
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 NAIROBI 004120

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SUBJECT: NAIROBI TRANSPORT BOSS ON CRIME, CORRUPTION &
POLITICS

REF: A. NAIROBI 2215

[1](#)B. NAIROBI 2974

Classified By: PolCouns Andre for reasons 1.4 B & D.

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: The Chairman of Nairobi's private transportation association describes how the city's criminal organizations and police feed off the cash-rich sector. He also expresses concerns about a possible Raila Odinga presidency and mild support for Kibaki remaining in office. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) PolCouns met with Godfrey Chege, Chairman of Nairobi's Matatu Owners Association ("Matatu" refers to the ubiquitous privately-owned minivans that ply set routes throughout the country, providing most passenger transport in Kenya). The Matatu sector is a prime target of extortion by both organized crime (such as the Mungiki, see ref A) and by the police (see ref B). Each Matatu route in the city elects a representative to the association's governing body. The representatives then choose one of their own to serve as the Chairman.

Police & Thieves: Corruption & Extortion

[1](#)3. (C) According to Chege, there are about 50,000 matatus operating in Nairobi. He claims that the Mungiki receive protection racket payoffs from about half while several smaller criminal organizations collect from the other half. The Mungiki control routes that begin or end in Kikuyu-majority areas. On average, each vehicle pays 500 shillings a day (USD 7.50) to operate, plus additional "fees" when a new vehicle begins to operate on a route or a new driver or apprentice begins working. On Chege's figures, that means criminal organizations operating in Nairobi collect about USD 375,000 a day just in matatu operating fees, let alone the other matatu-related income and incomes from various other extortion rackets focused on the slums and poorer housing estates (monthly resident protection fees, shopkeeper protection fees, etc.).

[1](#)4. (C) Again according to Chege, individuals in the central government and city hall split 5 million shillings (USD 75,000) a day as their take just from the Mungiki on extortionate "operating fees" alone. They also get a cut on

the other rackets, but Chege said he did not know how much. Chege maintained that for years the primary collector of Mungiki payoffs of the Nairobi police was then Nairobi Provincial Police Officer Mwangi Kingori ("Mungiki paid him every Sunday"). Kingori is now the Provincial Police Officer for Coast Province, based in Mombasa.

15. (C) Comment: PolCouns has heard this same allegation about Kingori from multiple sources. Kingori was transferred to Mombasa at about the time the government launched its crackdown against the Mungiki. Kingori told Polcouns at the time that "I have no patience for these coastal Muslims who complain about a few arrests and say the government is anti-Muslim. I see Kikuyus shot dead every day just because they are said to be Mungiki. Shall I complain that the government is anti-Kikuyu?" While not exactly defending the Mungiki, Kingori conveyed a sense of identifying with them. He is one of the most senior police officials in the country. If the government were sincere about eradicating the Mungiki criminal organization rather than just temporarily curbing it, they would move against Kingori and other officials and politicians well known as Mungiki associates. End Comment.

16. (C) Asked about the consequences for a matatu owner who refuses to pay, Chege eagerly showed Polcouns the scars from two gunshot wounds he says resulted from his refusal to pay off the Mungiki in 2003. "When I complained to Kingori he said 'How do you know they were Mungiki and not just common criminals? Was the word 'Mungiki' tattooed on their foreheads?' Chege claims the police then refused to take his statement about the attack.

17. (C) Chege indicated that in recent days Mungiki

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collections have come way down. "They still have some strength in Eastlands, especially the Dandora housing estate and the Mathare slums (both largely populated by Kikuyus), but they have mostly been chased away everywhere else in the city." He added, "The government allowed Mungiki to steal from us for years, but when the Mungiki began to directly challenge the government and to embarrass the government with their terror tactics and police killings, then the government had to act. When they sent in police to get the street-level Mungiki there was little chance of innocent civilians getting hurt because the police know full well who is Mungiki and who is not. After all, they work with them every day."

18. (C) Chege maintains that since the Mungiki were beaten back, the predations of the police and city officials have increased. "We are a little better off now than when we had to pay off both the police and the Mungiki or others like them. Now, on most our routes, we only pay the police. The police demand more now than before, about 700 shilling a day (USD 10.50), but the increase is less than what we were paying the Mungiki. But we all know that one day the Mungiki will come back."

19. (C) Chege went into agonizing detail about how city government officials and others in the administration fleece the matatu owners over such issues as vehicle road-worthiness, vehicle inspections and license plates. When pressed, he also admitted that matatu owners often employ unlicensed drivers and do not penalize them for undisciplined practices (picking up passengers on the road rather than using convenient purpose-made matatu stands and general recklessness, for example). Chege, however, maintained that "the police fine us and then pocket the fines no matter what we do. A perfectly polite driver and a completely undisciplined driver would both be forced to pay off the police the same amount."

On Politics: Concern about Raila, Mild Support for Kibaki

10. (C) As the Chairman of Nairobi's Matatu Association,

Chege is well aware of the sentiments of the capital's small business owners, most of whom are fellow Kikuyus. He expressed the following political views:

-- "Raila (Odinga) is popular with young people because he makes wonderful promises and they believe him. We their elders have heard many wonderful promises from politicians before. We know better than to believe such talk."

-- "The low level workers and the jobless all support Raila. In Nairobi people of this class are mostly Luo or Luhya. They believe that if Raila comes to power, they will receive many direct benefits. Luos will refuse to pay their rent and will demand to ride our matatus for free." The first two months of a Raila presidency will see chaos in Nairobi, but things will then settle down to business."

-- "Raila's 'Pentagon' (the senior political leaders from various regions backing Odinga's presidential candidacy) are all well known grabbers. They will be no better than the grabbers in Kibaki's cabinet, except that Kibaki's men have all eaten well these past five years and so are now full. Raila's 'Pentagon' have not been in power, so they are all hungry."

-- "Kibaki is a peaceful man. He is not like Moi. He will not want blood shed to keep him in power. He would rather go home. He will not preach hate. But some of those around Kibaki will do whatever they can to keep power."

-- "Kibaki's economic policies have made us a bit better off. In Moi's time all the matatus were wrecks. No one could afford new vehicles. Look around you now at the number of new and larger vehicles. The more large matatus the less traffic congestion."

-- "Kibaki has been good for us, but he could do better if he cared for the common man as much as he cares for his friends."

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Bio Sketch of Godfrey W. Chege

¶11. (U) Chege was in the Kenyan Army for fifteen years, most of that time in charge of motor pool operations. He ended his military career at the grade of Captain. His last assignment was as a UN peacekeeper in Namibia. "I saved all my money from that deployment, then left the army in 1992 and went into the matatu business with the help of my uncle who already owned a few vehicles." Chege is a Kikuyu from near Nakuru in Rift Valley Province. He is fifty years old. Aside from his matatu business, he works as a freelance insurance investigator and runs a farm.

Comment: Worries about Raila, Mild Support for Kibaki

¶12. (C) Chege's political comments are typical of Kikuyu small business owners: Fear that the poor, especially the Luo poor, will react to a Raila victory by claiming for themselves a moratorium on paying rent and transport and in general a level of impunity heretofore reserved only for the rich and politically well-connected. Such sentiments likely would surface initially following a Raila victory, but before long reality would settle in. Raila is unlikely to encourage such behaviour once he is actually in office, but he will need to find some way to mollify his supporters among the poor who have hopelessly high expectations of him.

¶13. (C) Chege's endorsement of Kibaki is noteworthy only for its mildness. He seemed to hold affection for the President, but at the same time expressed disappointment that he was not a more dynamic, people-oriented leader.

SLUTZ